

"Bug of the Month"

As outside temperatures begin to drop in the fall, some insects begin to appear indoors in increasing numbers as they seek sheltered places to overwinter. One common indoor invader in the Pacific Northwest is the western conifer seed bug (*Leptoglossus occidentalis*), a member of the "leaf-footed" bug family.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The western conifer seed bug is a "true bug". They are in the insect order Hemiptera or "half-winged" which derives its name from the partly thickened and partly membranous forewing. They have piercing, sucking mouthparts which are usually held against the underside of the body, between the bases of the legs, when not in use. The female western conifer seed bug is larger than the male. Adults average about $\frac{3}{4}$ of inch long and are reddish-brownish in color, overall. Underneath the wings, the top of the abdomen is yellow or light orange with five transverse black patches. The hind legs have a "leaf-like" expansion. The "true bugs" undergo an incomplete metamorphosis so the young nymphs appear as smaller versions of the adults, but are wingless. The eggs are small and barrel-shaped and are laid on the foliage in mid to late spring.

WHAT DO THEY DO? The western conifer seed bug feeds on the maturing cones and seed of over 30 species of conifers. Both adult and nymph stages insert their long proboscises into cones and suck the juices from seeds. Heavy feeding can cause up to 41% loss of a seed crop in Douglas-fir.



Originally discovered west of the Rocky Mountains, the range of the western conifer seed bug has expanded across the northern United States and into Canada. Adults emerge from overwintering sites in late May or early June and feed on one-year cones. Eggs are laid on host conifers and hatch in about 10 days. The young nymphs feed on the needles and tender tissue of cone scales and move to the developing seeds as they mature. The nymphs reach adulthood around mid-August and feed on ripening seeds until early fall when they seek overwintering sites under tree bark, in dead and dry Douglas-fir trees, and in hawk and rodent nests. It is at this point that adults may enter buildings in search of protected sites to hibernate. The adults do not bite or sting, but can cause great alarm simply by the sheer numbers that invade a building.

MANAGEMENT. The best method for controlling the western conifer seed bug is exclude avenues of entry into buildings..

- Replace loosely fitting screens, windows and doors.
- Caulk gaps around door frames, window frames and soffits.
- Caulk cracks behind chimneys and underneath the wood fascia.
- Screen fireplace chimneys and attic and wall vents.

MORE QUESTIONS? Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at mail@ndvecc.navy.mil.